Course Introduction and What is Program Evaluation?

Patrick J. Wolf
EDRE 6213/ESRM 6613
University of Arkansas
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Presentation Outline

- Introduction to us
- Introduction to the course
- Break (~1:15)
- What is program evaluation?
Introduction to Us

- Name
- City/town of origin
- Graduate program
- Reason enrolled in graduate program
Introduction to Course

- Review of syllabus/course logistics
- Discussion of evaluation proposal
- Questions?
Review of Syllabus/Logistics

- Review syllabus
- Course logistics:
  - Course webpage
    - http://www.uark.edu/ua/der/People/Wolf/edre6213.html
  - Reserves
  - Flu
Evaluation Proposal

- Total of 45% of grade
- Most points based on first complete draft
- Score comprised of:
  - 80% substance
  - 20% presentation
- Main element of substance is rigor of research plan - but realistic
Questions So Far?
Break

- Back in 15 minutes
Introduction to Program Evaluation: Overview

- Definition
- Scope/content
- Essence
- Criteria
- Challenges
- Constraints
- Process
- Purpose, etc.
Preferred Definition of Program Evaluation

“...a social science activity directed at collecting, analyzing, interpreting, and communicating information about the workings and effectiveness of social programs.” RLF, p. 2
Scope/Content of Evaluation

“On Topic” high school debate:
- Inherency (need)
- Solvency (design → impact/outcomes)
- Workability (implementation)
- Advantageousness (efficiency, B/C)

Generally not concerned with political viability/popularity, but:
- Often a product of it
- Sometimes influences subsequent decisions
Essence of Evaluation

In what ways and to what extent is the world different because of this program?
Criteria for Evaluating

- Effectiveness/efficacy – goal achievement
  - Impact
  - Outcomes (end & intermediate)
  - Outputs
  - Inputs
- Efficiency – cost reduction, B – C, B/C
- Responsiveness
- Equity
- Legality
Evaluation Constraints

- Access – facilities, databases, participants
- Resources – financial, time, expertise
- Stakeholder relationships
- Ethics
Evaluation Process

1. Value formation
2. Goal setting
3. Program theory: $X \rightarrow Y$
4. Baseline determination
5. Program intervention
6. Assessment
7. Interpretation/judgment
8. Reporting
Purposes of Evaluation

- Accountability
- Efficiency in resource allocation
  - Should we be doing it
  - How can we best do it
  - For whom
- Determine how to solve societal problems
- Political reasons
- Veritas
Program/Stakeholder Involvement

- More “formative”
  - Self-assessment
  - Empowerment

- More “summative”
  - Participatory/collaborative
  - Independent
Evaluation Methodology

Classifications

- Quantitative
  - Comparison: “natural” or artificial
  - Time horizon: cross-sectional or longitudinal
- Qualitative
  - Case Study
    - Single
    - Multiple/comparative
  - Ethnographic/phenomenological
Methodologies for Valid Causal Inferences

- Widely accepted as causal:
  - Experimental
  - Regression discontinuity
  - Individual-level fixed effects

- Disputed:
  - Matching (e.g. propensity score)
  - Observational with control variables
  - Some qualitative designs (e.g. crucial case study and controlled comparative)
Conclusions: Program Evaluation is

- Important
- Difficult
- Variegated
- Fun (when it works)
Questions/Discussion?